

**UNDER THE NET by Iris Murdoch – TITLE ANALYSIS AS PICARESQUE NOVEL**



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## UNDER THE NET by Iris Murdoch – TITLE ANALYSIS AS PICARESQUE NOVEL

**‘All the time when I speak to you, even now, I’m saying not precisely what I think, but what I think will impress you and make you respond – when there are strong motives for deception. In fact, one’s so used to this one hardly sees it. The whole language is a machine for making falsehood’.**  
**(Hugo Belfounder)**

Under the net is a **picaresque** and philosophical novel in which we read about the adventurous journey of a struggling young homeless writer and translator, Jake, who finds himself trapped under the net of **‘abstraction, generalization and theory’** in which he wanders about place to place by his misunderstanding.

Although he has a parasitic nature but still some qualities of his character make the novel interesting to the point of **existentialism**. In his book **‘the Silencer’** he states that all theorizing is flight, and man must rule by the situation itself, and however hard we may try as it were to crawl under the net.

**Murphy** by **Samuel Beckett** and **Pierrot Mon Ami** by **Queneau** both books are echoed in this story. In this lightly comic novel about work, love, wealth and fame, Jake seeks to improve his circumstances and make-up his past by reconnecting with Hugo-a philosophical figure and **expressionist** from whose conversation he drives the theme of his first book **‘The Silencer’**. Because for him language is corrupt machine for making falsehood.

He establishes the relationship between language and silence, and what it means to search for truth for an artist whose medium is language, in which

the space between speaker and hearer creates ambiguity. The book depicts the adverse effects of the **dole mentality on British Culture**.

His ex-girlfriend Anna also justifies the idea that only very simple things can be said without falsehood and those are just routine work. She runs **mime theatre** which **abolished language and focused on gestures, expressions, and movements**. She quits singing and turns to silence. In mime theatre the masks are little larger than life, most of the masks are full face but two of them are made profile which hide actor's real identity; stage is carpeted, queer expressiveness of neck and shoulder. Extraordinary silence creates hypnotic effects.

The language is incapable of depicting truth therefore silence is preferable. The novel's title suggests the characters' desire to expose the reality beneath the imposed patterns of net. Jake's net of perception scattered and the pieces of it went flying like birds when he learns how wrong he was.

Owing to his careless and lazy attitude society will take him by the neck and shake him and make him do a sensible job. To some extent Jake's character reminds us of **Holden Canfield** of '**the Cather in the Rye Fame**'. Both are separated from normality, and take us on their disjointed, almost chaotic trips around their respective cities.

Murdoch supports the philosophical school of **nominalism** which relates to **relativism**. The book is structured around a series of helpless adventures, hero's interpretation of events and the relationships of the people around him is always wrong, but presented as if they are right. In epilogue, the truth seems completely different from what he had expected, all the pieces of the puzzle fall into a different pattern from the one he had been working on.

Two alternatives are presented before the protagonist, but he chooses a third way, screen-writing, symbolizes money and prostitution of artistic desire for material gain. And politics, in the form of **Lefty** and the **NISP** symbolizes political commitment. But later he accepts that nothing in the world is more important than money in Paris. He is mostly lead astray from his purpose.

The city is a metaphorical foil for Jake's struggles, his own tendency to wave between motion and stillness. He is intelligent, self-absorbed, keen observe and thinker but has instable ego. Some people are the inhabitant of his universe. He's the sun and the star of ongoing soap opera in his inner life or false perception. Like a philosopher he thinks about God, freedom, and immortality but these are just ideas nothing can be actually achieved.

He provides all details about his encounter like Magd isn't beautiful but both pretty and attractive, with regular features and fine complexion, peach-like mask of make-up, curly hair dyed gold. Room is dusty, nasty-looking corner shop, cheap advertisement board. Mrs. Tinckham's shop is full of cats those sit on the counter and empty shelves, their amber eyes narrowed and winking in the sun, hot fur. Anna has merry brown eyes, podgy hands, husky-speaking voice, a tenderly molded face, and warm glow face full of yearning, heavy brown hair.

Love isn't a feeling but silent action. A just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality. Like a **Shakespearian drama** unrequited love weaves through this novel. The relations moves in circle form like Jake loves Anna but she yearns for Hugo whose heart is for Sadie but Sadie likes Jake.

In his book he mentions that Ideas are like money those circulate like coins, communicate and justified by success, and can be misused. We're national civilized animals in the sense of theory-making. This was the something which the ancients understood. **Psyche** was told that if she spoke

about her pregnancy her child would be mortal; if she kept silent it would be a god. But ideas occur to individuals, that's the trouble with human race.

To cap up, Jake's sufferings are because of his misguided understanding of motivation and intentions around him. He was in search of a flat but his intention diverts to find Anna, his book 'the Silencer', and Hugo. But through the series of events, he probably finds nothing throughout his journey, he remains unable to re-establish his relation with Anna, and finds his book. The only thing he achieves, is Mr. Mars who has become burden for other due to his over age. So **'all of a piece throughout, thy chase had a beast in view, thy wars brought nothing about, thy lovers were all untrue, tis well an Old Age is out, and time to being a New'** is the apt description of this novel.